

When to put a stop to office bickering

As hard as it is to listen to two co-workers arguing, it's even worse when people keep their opinions to themselves. Creative tension happens when people share constructive differences of opinion, which can ultimately lead to better work.

Of course, not all arguing is constructive or productive. Here's how to tell whether you *should* step in to defuse bickering:

Is the argument about a project, or is it getting personal? If it's getting personal or petty, you'll hear things like "*you guys* in marketing" or "here you go again." Project-oriented arguments are more likely to contain inclusive language such as "our outcomes" or "project success."

Are you being asked to choose sides? If you receive private e-mails asking you to side with one part or the other, it's time for the two to talk directly. Don't get sucked into the middle.

Is the argument affecting the quality of the team's work? If timelines are thrown off or deadlines are being missed because of a disagreement, you can objectively point out the fact that their dispute is impacting the team's work, and ask for a change.

--Adapted from "How to Tell Creative Tension From Team Bickering," Wayne Turmel, BNET.

Note: Read more tips in our free report, [Workplace Conflict Resolution](#).